

Commonwealth Series — 2.

LOVE OF COUNTRY.

EDWARD E. HALE AT THE SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, FEB. 25, 1894.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not,
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.

Psalm 137, 5, 6.

The Psalm is a Psalm of exile. It shows the feeling which compelled Israel to return to Jerusalem, her home. To a people of faith like hers, the love of country is like the love of home and of God. The three, indeed, are one. The man who sang this song lived in the midst of the luxuries of the capital of the world. But he had not learned to chatter in the accents of a broken dialect, he had not gained the cosmopolitan graces of one who has forgotten his own language, nor the languid negations of an absentee.

As society becomes more complicated, we find that it becomes matter of political and religious necessity so to train our children that they shall not lose their inborn love of country, and so that they may serve their country, it may be to the death, when she requires. And one is now glad to see, on every side, that this necessity is observed. In the matter of politics, the state slowly rouses to understand that she must train her children, boys and girls, to be good citizens. Such training came of course to the New England boy in the old, simple days of town-meetings and small towns. He went to the town-meeting with his father. He could not speak, but he could hear, and he could join in the applause, when the town declared war against George the Third. Nay, to this day, he is a part of the body politic, from the time he can lead a horse to water. He can say 'we' when he speaks of the town's place in the Common Wealth. "We sold so many potatoes at Newport. We shipped so much hay to Savannah. We have built a new bridge across the river." For he has had his share in these duties. But in cities, the work of boys is not so woven in with the common enterprise. No Boston boy has any such chance to join in the mutual enterprise of life, nor does he partake in the common honor. He is simply sent to school — where, probably he does not want to go. Somebody else pays for his training there, and, if he thinks of the matter at all, it is with the mortifying

feeling that he takes no active share in the common-weal.

Now, in the training of our children, whether in city or country, we want to teach them definitely and at an early age what their duties to the state are and will be. As Hannah More wrote a paper on the training of a princess—when the princess Charlotte was born—and fifty people wrote on the training of a prince when the Prince of Wales was born, we owe it to our own State and nation, that the People, which is our Sovereign, shall be trained to know its duties. This means that every boy and girl, every man and woman, who counts in the make-up of the People, must be trained to such knowledge. More than this, the People must be trained to love of country as they are trained to the love of God.

I have known but one man who seems to me to be wholly without principle. Specious and attractive as Lucifer, for a long time he deceived those who knew him best. I first caught the false ring, which showed all was false, when I heard him ridicule the flag of his country.

Now the intellectual training for knowledge in citizenship is not far to seek. If only all that were needed were information!

Of the methods which have invented themselves for this purpose, many cross your daily lives. There are some which will not be so familiar to you.

Thus I have watched with much interest the re-establishment of the old country debating society, in the shape of what is called the Lyceum League, and again what is called the American Patriotic League. The Lyceum League is a confederation of debating clubs, now numbering more than a thousand in different parts of this country, which involve at the same time studies, by no means superficial, of the basis of American statesmanship. The clubs are generally made up of boys and young men, but I observe in some instances, particularly in the Middle and Western States, women unite in the debates. They have a very significant and impressive ritual, they correspond with each other, the catalogues of their libraries are made for them by an intelligent central board, and I am fond of thinking that we shall see their influence extending as young men come out from them who really know the history and purpose of our American institutions. It was the central board of these Lyceum Leagues which hung out the American flag, I think, over twenty thousand school-houses, on the Columbus Day of last year. It arranged the machinery for almost as many celebrations on that day, which were so carried out as to involve very careful instruction in the privileges and duties of young Americans. The agency which brought the bishops of the Mormon Church together in the Mormon Temple, to thank God that the United States was founded on democratic princi-

ples is an agency not to be despised.

The American Patriotic League — not to be confounded with the mythical ‘A. P. A.,’ which I believe has no real existence — is a similar central organization, established in the city of New York.

Prior to either of these associations in date, was the formation in this city, by the late Dr. Crehore, of the Good Citizenship Society. The correspondence of this Society, which I have had an opportunity of seeing, shows the very wide interest which extends through this country on this subject. Its work has been done mostly by correspondence and by printing really fundamental treatises with regard to the method of the government of cities, and, for the use of schools, an elaborate digest showing the worth or the worthlessness of the books which are pressed on school committees by the manufacturers of books, as proper textbooks in statesmanship and politics.

What is familiarly known in different cities of America as the ‘Old South movement’ was set on foot by our wise and patriotic friend, Mrs. Hemenway, as soon as our Old South Meeting-House was secure as a fit centre for such an enterprise. In many other cities, the Boston example has been followed, but nowhere is this work better done than it is done under the shelter of the Old South Meeting-House itself. The 22d of February may be called the anniversary day, and we had an opportunity on Thursday of

seeing something of the result of this training. Briefly, it means this for Boston children: that all the patriotic holidays are observed with impressive ceremonial in the Old South Meeting-House. This means that the 22d of February, the 17th of March, the 19th of April, the 17th of June, the 4th of July and, sometimes, Forefathers' Day are marked by the assembly of the older boys and girls in that venerable house, where they are addressed by competent speakers on the lessons involved in the historical associations of those days. Through the summer months, when, after all, there are a few people left in Boston, a systematic course of lectures adapted for young people, on the salient points of American history, is maintained there. Best of all, perhaps, four prizes, two of forty dollars each, and two of twenty dollars, are given every year to those pupils of the several high schools who compete for essays on historical subjects. The prizes were awarded on Thursday for essays on the discoveries of Coronado and on the part which Massachusetts took in the Ordinance of 1787. These are two critical subjects, and I venture to say, from some slight knowledge of the papers, that the successful papers would have done great credit to any young writer. This system has now been continued for many years, and all the persons who have competed for these essays are urged to join a society, which is now a society of considerable force, called the Old South Historical

Society. We are thus training, right in the midst of our public schools, a set of young men and young women who know something about the history of their own country.

The result of this steady recognition of patriotism and history, as shown by the work of the Public Library, has been very gratifying. The increase of the reading of history, largely, I think, under the direction of our own fellow-workman there, Miss Mary Jenkins, has been remarkable, and the Public Library once more has shown its great importance as an element for education.

In this business of teaching children that they do not live for themselves and do not die for themselves, the great co-operative societies undoubtedly bear a part. The Christian Endeavor, the Epworth League, Saint Andrew's Guild, and our own Lend a Hand Clubs, are not necessarily confined in their membership to children, but still all of them have some branches or methods by which children and young people can join in them. In the Christian Endeavor and Epworth League particularly, it is scarcely expected that adults shall be members, except as leaders. In all of these, in some to a greater, and in some to a less extent, the idea of mutual duty or public spirit is prominent. In our circulars in the Lend a Hand, we state the first object of our clubs to be training in public spirit. The members shall not think that they live for themselves. In every meeting of every club, some work must be referred

to in which the members are of use to some one outside the society. I am tempted here to speak of the quarterly meeting of Lend a Hand Clubs in this neighborhood, which was held on Thursday. Fully half the Clubs represented were Clubs of adults, but the other half showed how children, in some instances not more than seven and eight years old, can be enlisted to feel that, as I said just now, they are members of the common-weal. If it is only in making a scrap-book for a boy shut up in a hospital, a child is taught that there is something which he also can do for the rest. And when that child learns that this nation depends, not on the will of one individual, but on the united wills of millions upon millions, why, the great central lesson of American statesmanship is gained.

In the remarkable address which the governor made to the Boston scholars on Thursday — an address which I think will find its place in the children's declamation books for the next century — he made them see very distinctly one of the fountains which, in the very beginning, poured sweet and cold water for Washington's fame. He told them how Washington could never have been what he was, had he not, even in the beginning and, one might say almost to the end, known what hardship is, had he not starved on half-fare and drunk from bitter cups when there was need. No man studies deeply or wisely Washington's life but he sees that Washington's marvellous knowledge

of men came from his early hand-to-hand dealing with men as one of themselves, even from his boyhood. Washington was destined to be the richest man in America. He was the richest man in America when he was appointed commander-in-chief. But he was not appointed because he was the richest man in America. And his success is due to the training which he had from the time when he was a poor widow's son, when he must have split the wood himself, and watered the cow, when he built his mother's fire and husked his mother's corn.

It is very hard to say how you will train a man who is to direct the fortunes of large numbers of men, or who is to be thrown into other circumstances of high responsibility. The Power who directs nations, chose in this case that the man who was to be the richest man in America should begin unconscious of such a future; not as a beggar, not as one who often suffered from hunger or thirst, but as one who had daily duties to discharge, and who was in no sort the superior in condition of the lads around him. To such a boy is given the advantages of a common-sense education. He knows no language but his own, but he is taught this language by the friend of Addison and Steele. He proves to be a person who always knows a great opportunity; but the training of his boyhood is also such that he does little things well. I told six hundred young teachers on Wednesday that he wrote a better hand than any one of

us who were there together; and his accuracy in accounts, his skill in the details of agriculture, his quick eye for the points of a horse or a mule, the preciseness with which his flour was made and his tobacco was packed — all these are matters of record, all these are matters of history, as well as the quick eye by which he noted the moment when he was to pounce upon his prey at Trenton, or the decision with which he united an overwhelming force at Yorktown. It is not unnatural, then, that with what is becoming more and more a consecrated day, as Washington's birthday comes round, we should quicken our efforts for showing the children of the people what are the duties, the responsibilities and the privileges, which attach in America to every one of them who is willing to strike when duty calls, who can stand firm when the responsibility pivots upon him, or who, after the victory is won, can use the privilege.

We do not teach them that they are to be presidents or the mothers of presidents. But we do mean to teach them the dignity of duty, the necessity of duty. We mean to teach them that only he who serves can command. And we mean to teach them, not simply in the words of a catechism, but in the four-square discipline of life, the central lesson on which democratic government is founded—a lesson first announced by the Saviour of men. He announced it as he went to this Jerusalem, to die for his country and for mankind:

“Whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant, and whosoever would be first among you shall be your bondsman ; even as I came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give my life a ransom for many.”

For all our knowledge of facts is worthless, unless boy or girl have the life which shall use them well. *Well*—and not as children of hell use them. The training to citizenship is impossible unless it be religious training. As I said the love of country is a part of the love of home, and it is alive with the love of God. I am therefore never satisfied with the work of a Sunday school, unless training to citizenship be regarded as one of its essential duties. And one listens with sorrow, when he finds that a state is disposed to omit her religious ceremonies, to pass by, as needless, the forms, however simple, which show that she knows by whom princes reign and judges administer law. One feels afraid we are going backward when men want to destroy the few reminders which we have of the courage and virtue of our fathers ; as men want to destroy our State House to-day.

It is not purchased science which we want. It is not well-worded schemes of administration. It is passionate love of country. We are not teaching that men will grow rich if their country is strong. We are teaching them that

as God lives for her, they must live for her; and that so, if she needs them, they must be ready to die for her. It is not any bit of economy, or of greed, as, that democratic government is cheap, or that in a republic merchants are prosperous. We are teaching them that their only King is the Lord God Almighty. We are teaching them that he is a Father of infinite love. And we are bidding them thank him, who has given them a Mother of infinite love, whose name is Our Country. We are not attempting to describe far less to measure, the strength of separate threads, all woven and twisted in the great web-work which we call America. But we are teaching them that that web has been woven by infinite love, that its history is history wrought out in God's purpose. And these boys and girls must, from the first, know that their life-blood gives the color and their vigor the strength to the fabric. They are never to see their flag without a grateful smile. They are never to sing her songs, but as they sing hymns in worship. They are never to call their birth a poor accident of fortune; always they are to thank God as the first of his gifts and the greatest, that they were born Americans. Or if he have brought them here in the shadow of his clouds by day, or in the blaze of his watch-fires by night, from less favored lands, over some Red Sea of blood, or through some desert of hunger, always they are to thank him that America welcomed them with a mother's arms; she gave

them to suck at a mother's breast ; she wept with them in a mother's tears.

For a nation is not a heap of sand-grains. It is on an organism all alive, in which each cell and germ feeds each other and by each other is fed. And as every cell in an apple tree belongs to an apple tree, and every cell in an oak tree belongs to an oak, and as no cell can live alone—not an hour—so does every child of America belong to America, and America belong to every child of hers. You may well call the organic tie mysterious. So is the attraction of gravitation. Nobody has ever explained either, but for all that no man should doubt their power. Birth, blood, climate, language, history, the line of my ancestors, the color of the sunset, the shape of the snowdrifts the old stain of blow on the pavement or the memory of battle—every outward circumstance and every sacred memory combine to make my life and the nation's life. Because God is and reigns, my country is and I am. His life, my life, and her life are one.

Our boys and girls are to be trained not only to know this but to feel it. They are to be Christian patriots. And then we are sure they will be good citizens. We do not build on their learning, nor on their graces, nor their creed, not, God knows, on their wealth. No! We ask them to love their home because it is God's home, to serve the state because it is God's kingdom. And this is the whole duty of man.

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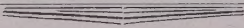
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